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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: NATO SECGEN VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN, NOVEMBER 26 -  
27, 2008

Classified By: ACTING DCM VALERIE C. FOWLER FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)  
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¶1. (SBU) Summary: NATO Secretary General (SYG) Jaap de Hoop Scheffer followed a shortened schedule during his November 26-27 visit to Afghanistan but achieved his substantive purposes. He met with President Karzai and other senior Afghan leaders, UNAMA head Kai Eide, and a visiting UN Security Council delegation. He also visited the U.S.-le PRT in Jalalabad and the Khyber Border Coordination Center. The NATO SecGen delivered a strong private message to Afghan officials on the importance of the 2009 presidential elections. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On December 1, Ambassador Gentilini, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative (SCR), briefed the NATO Caucus in Kabul on the November 26-27 visit to Afghanistan of NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. The SCR said that the SYG returned early to Brussels to chair the NAC and regretted that he was unable to keep his planned meetings at the Lithuanian PRT in Chaghcharan, the U.S. PRT in Farah, and the French FOB Tora. Nevertheless, the SYG met with President Karzai, Speaker of the Lower House Qanooni, UN Special Representative Kai Eide, and a visiting UN Security Council delegation. The SYG believed that those exchanges, several briefings and press opportunities, and trips to the U.S. PRT in Jalalabad and the Khyber Border Coordination Center (KBCC), had allowed him to meet his goals on substance.

¶3. (C) The day before the SYG's November 26 one-on-one meeting and a wider dinner with the President, President Karzai had publicly called for a "timeline for withdrawal" in the presence of a UNSC delegation. Karzai shifted away from this demand with de Hoop Scheffer by explaining he had only meant a timeline for "success or victory." Other topics in their conversation included the need for better international cooperation and Karzai's sense that some PRTs were unhelpfully engaged in "parallel governance." The SYG advised Karzai to put things in the context that with a new U.S. administration, this was the time to build new relations, not to level sharp criticism at friends and allies. On elections, Karzai reportedly told de Hoop Scheffer that he was under pressure because of difficult circumstances in Helmand and Ghazni, but remained committed to hold elections in 2009. At their joint press conference, however, Karzai continued with criticisms of the international community effort and especially sent a tough message on civilian casualties.

¶4. (C) The SYG's meeting with Speaker Qanooni focused on elections. Qanooni said that the usual debate over whether the Constitution requires Spring elections was a false one. He said the reality was that many senior Afghans in Parliament do not want early elections and are looking for

excuses to postpone them. He suggested that one way to manage them would be a Karzai gesture, perhaps a visit by the President to Parliament, or an initiative seeking a Constitutional amendment on the election timing. The SYG, who publicly stuck to the line that the elections timing was up to the Afghans to decide, privately took a more direct position. He reportedly made it clear to Qanooni (and Karzai) that the best choice for elections was "shortly after summer." De Hoop Scheffer described presidential elections as a "must" for 2009, the most important objective ahead. NATO publics would not understand why elections could be held in 2004 and not in 2009. Besides, elections would serve to legitimize the victor and turn around a sour public mood. Qanooni replied that he understood perfectly and would remain flexible.

¶5. (SBU) In a brief meeting with Interior Minister Atmar, the SYG discussed police reform and development. Atmar pressed for more "Afghanization" of the process and a greater investment in the intelligence capacity of the Afghan National Police (ANP). The SYG explained NATO's Oplan in support of the ANP. He also invited Atmar to NATO to meet with the NAC on the morning of December 10, 2008.

¶6. (SBU) The SYG reportedly was very impressed at seeing Afghans and Pakistanis working closely together to monitor border activity at the Khyber Border Coordination Center (KBCC).

¶7. (SBU) De Hoop Scheffer also met with the UN Security Council delegation. Reportedly they emphasized their desire for a UN-led effort in Afghanistan and pledged to provide the UNAMA Mission and UNSR Kai Eide with the resources to

coordinate the civilian aspects of international activities here. The SYG held a separate meeting with Kai Eide, about which Ambassador Gentilini said only that it was "as usual, frank and open."

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